

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SAJ-01 NIC-01 /068 W
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R 311037Z DEC 74

FM USMISSION USBERLIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 310

INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN UNN

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION NATO

CINCEUR FOR POLAD AND OPS

CINCUSAFE FOR POLAD AND OPS

CINCUSAREUR FOR POLAD, OPS, AEAGC, COC

USELMLO

C O N F I D E N T I A L USBERLIN 2356

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PFOR, WB, GE, UR

SUBJECT: DETENTION OF U.S. SERVICEMAN AT
SOVIET CHECKPOINT DREWITZ

1. SUMMARY: U.S. SERVICEMAN DRIVING FROM HELMSTEDT
TO BERLIN IN POV DECEMBER 27 WAS DETAINED BY EAST
GERMANS AND SOVIETS FOR APPROXIMATELY FIVE HOURS AT
SOVIET CHECKPOINT DREWITZ, ON GROUNDS THAT HIS VEHICLE
ANSWERED DESCRIPTION OF ONE INVOLVED IN ACCIDENT ON
AUTOBAHN. RELEASE WAS EFFECTED THROUGH INTERVENTION
OF U.S. MILITARY POLICE OFFICER WITH SOVIET CHECK-
POINT OFFICIALS. CIRCUMSTANCES OF INCIDENT TEND TO
MINIMIZE POSSIBILITY THAT SERVICEMAN WAS INVOLVED IN
EXFILTRATION ACTIVITY. MISSION MADE ROUTINE PROTEST TO
SOVIET EMBASSY AT PROTOCOL OFFICER LEVEL AND IN RESPONSE
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RECEIVED RENEWED APOLOGY FOR DETENTION.END SUMMARY.

2. SERVICEMAN, STATIONED AT GELNHAUSEN (FRG), PROCESSED HELMSTEDT AND MARIENBORN CHECKPOINTS WITHOUT DIFFICULTY AND, BY HIS OWN ACCOUNT, MADE ONLY ONE BRIEF STOP (2-3 MINUTES) EN ROUTE TO WALK HIS DOG. UPON ARRIVING AT DREWITZ AT APPROXIMATELY 2010 LOCAL HE WAS PREVENTED FROM PROCEEDING INTO SOVIET CHECKPOINT AREA WHEN EAST GERMAN GUARD REFUSED TO RAISE FIRST POLE BARRIER FOR HIM. ALLIED TRAVELLERS ARRIVING AT DREWITZ RESPECTIVELY TWENTY AND THIRTY-FIVE MINUTES LATER OBSERVED DETENTION AND REPORTED IT TO U.S. CHECKPOINT OFFICISL AT DREILINDEN (THEY WERE ROUTED AROUND CLOSED BARRIER). ACCORDING TO SERVICEMAN'S ACCOUNT-CORRABORATED BY OBSERVATIONS OF OTHER TRAVELLERS, NO EAST GERMAN PERSONNEL APPROACHED VEHICLE OR SOUGHT TO QUESTION SERVICEMAN AT THIS TIME. AT APPROXIMATELY 2120, SOVIET SEDAN PULLED IN FRONT OF DETAINED VEHICLE, BARRIER WAS RAISED, AND SERVICEMAN WAS MOTIONED INTO SOVIET CHECKPOINT AREA BY EAST GERMAN GUARD. SERVICEMAN ENTERED SOVIET CHECKPOINT BUKLDING, BUT SOVIETS REFUSED TO PROCESS HIM.

3. U.S. MILITARY POLICE OFFICER ARRIVED AT SCENE APPROXIMATELY 2150, AND INQUIRED OF SOVIET DUTY OFFICER REASONS FOR SERVICEMAN'S DETENTION, INSISTING THAT HE BE PROCESSED AND ALLOWED TO PROCEED. SOVIET DUTY OFFICER GAVE NO EXPLANATION, AND SAID THAT HE WOULD HAVE TO REFER MATTER TO HIGHER AUTHORITY. AFTER FURTHER TWO-HOUR DELAY, COLONEL COMMANDING SOVIET FORCES IN BERLIN AREA ARRIVED AT CHECKPOINT AND, AFTER CONSULTATION WITH EAST GERMAN OFFICIALS, INFORMED MILITARY POLICE OFFICER THAT SERVICEMAN HAD BEEN DETAINED BECAUSE VEHICLE RESEMBLING HIS HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN ACCIDENT ON AUTOBAHN. AT SUGGESTION OF U.S. OFFICER, SERVICEMAN'S VEHICLE WAS EXAMINED TO DETERMINE WHETHER IT BORE ANY SIGNS OF INVOLVEMENT IN ACCIDENT. WHEN NONE WERE FOUND, SOVIET COLONEL APOLOGIZED FOR DETENTION AND SAID THAT SERVICE-MAN WAS FREE TO PROCEED THROUGH CHECKPOINT. U.S. OFFICER MADE BRIEF STATEMENT IN PROTEST TO EFFECT THAT GDR OFFICIALS HAD NO RIGHT TO DETAIN OR OTHERWISE

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ASSERT CONTROL OVER ALLIED PERSONNEL TRAVELLING UNDER SOVIET AEGIS ON BERLIN-HELMSTEDT AUTOBAHN. SERVICE-MAN AND MILITARY POLICE OFFICER DEPARTED SOVIET CHECKPOINT AT APPROXIMATELY 0110, DECEMBER 28. SUBSEQUENT INVESTIGATION REVEALED THAT SERVICEMAN HAD VIOLATED USAREUR REGULATIONS WHEN TRANSITTING AUTOBAHN IN SEPTEMBER 1974 (UNAUTHORIZED STOP AT GDR SERVICE STATION TO HAVE TIRE CHANGED), AND HAD BEEN BARRED FROM USING

AUTOBAHN UNTIL DECEMBER 30, 1974 (HE SHOULD IN FACT NEVER HAVE BEEN PROCESSED AT ALLIED CHECKPOINT HELMSTEDT).

4. COMMENT: LENGTH OF DETENTION AT DREWITZ HARDLY JUSTIFIABLE BUT MAY POSSIBLY BE ATTRIBUTED SIMPLY TO INITIAL LACK OF COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN SOVIET AND EAST GERMAN OFFICIALS, AND TO UNWILLINGNESS OF SOVIET DUTY OFFICER TO MAKE ANY DECISION UNTIL SUPERIOR HAD ARRIVED. WE HAVE HAD NO INTIMATIONS FROM SOVIETS THAT THERE WAS SUSPICION OF EXFILTRATION, AND OTHER ALLIED TRAVELLERS REPORTED NO INDICATIONS OF EAST GERMAN SUSPICIONS, E.G. PHOTO TAKING, ETC. END COMMENT

5. GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES, MISSION PROTOCOL OFFICER PROTESTED DETENTION TO SOVIET COUNTERPART ROMANOVSKIY DECEMBER 31, DRAWING ATTENTION BOTH TO UNWARRANTED EXERCISE OF GDR CONTROL OVER U.S. SERVICEMAN AND TO LENGTH OF TIME HE WAS DETAINED WHILE IN SOVIET CHECKPOINT AREA. ROMANOVSKIY SAID THAT HE WAS FAMILIAR WITH INCIDENT, SINCE SOVIET COLONEL HAD CALLED HIM FROM CHECKPOINT AROUND MIDNIGHT DECEMBER 27 TO ASK FOR INSTRUCTIONS. WHILE NOTING THAT SOVIET VIEW OF GDR COMPETENCE ON AUTOBAHN DIFFERED "SOMEWHAT" FROM THAT OF ALLIED (HE DID NOT ELABORATE), ROMANOVSKIY EXPRESSED APOLOGIES FOR DETENTION, WHICH HE ATTRIBUTED PURELY TO MISUNDERSTANDING ON PART OF SOVIETS AND EAST GERMANS. SOVIET COLONEL IN CHARGE OF CHECKPOINTS HAD BEEN ADVISED TO BE MORE CAREFUL ABOUT SUCH MATTERS IN FUTURE.

6. USCOB CONCURS.SELIGMANN

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